



## SOUTHERN GOTHICISM

William Faulkner & Flannery O'Connor

## SOUTHERN GOTHICISM

- The term “Southern” Gothic simply derives from the geographical location of its authors
- Generally very difficult to read, offering deep psychological or even philosophical insights and solutions
- The grotesque: “In these grotesque works, we find that the writer has made alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may never experience in his ordinary life.”

2

- They generally write on “Southern” subjects:

- The racist heritage of its white population
- Sense of loss and deprivation of history because of the defeat in the Civil War
- Southern pride or arrogance
- Class conflicts
- Empty or deserted manor houses in former plantations
- Religious fanaticism accompanied with racism

3

- What makes these works Gothic is their propensity for violence such as beatings, rapes, incestuous relationships, and murders, often involving one family member killing another, and lynchings
- Portraits of mentally ill, depressed, or otherwise gloomy or angry characters are frequent
- Protagonists are often not at peace within themselves or their culture
- Often a focus on religion

4

### TRADITIONAL VS. SOUTHERN GOTHICISM

#### ○ Similarities include:

- The existence of a villain-hero as the main protagonist
- A complicated network of family connections, sometimes hidden, which produces one family member endangering the life of another
- The figure of a pure maiden in some ways endangered by evil forces
- Dark ruins, castles, or mansions that seem haunted by supernatural forces

5

### O'CONNOR & HER WORKS

- She is a writer of contrast— a religious writer in a secular world, a Catholic in the Protestant South.
- Her stories often violate the usual standards of good taste —violence, racism, madness, deceit despair, and sexual perversity
- Her villains are often religious fanatics
- Implementation of grotesque and distorted characters
- The “main crime of her characters is the misrepresentation of the Christian faith”

6

- Her grotesque characters are “real” people intended to point toward a deeper level of truth, namely man’s need for salvation
- O’Connor’s goal is to “shock” her readers into a higher state of moral consciousness
- Intended her works to serve as warning--illustrations of faith gone astray for an ultimate reinstatement of true religiousness
- O’Connor: “Our life is centered in our redemption by Christ; what I see in the world is in relation to that.”

7

### STYLE

- Irony
- a central grotesque
- Symbolism
- Allusion
- Characters arriving at an epiphany

8